

Mary's Musings:

In his book, Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam describes the increasing tendency of Americans to opt out of participation in community events. His point is that just as bowling is a team sport, a community is by definition a team activity. There is much talk these days about the importance of community, and the search for true community. Yet, research shows that contrary to what is said, people are more and more likely to "bowl alone," so to speak, rather than attend community events.

We hope that WGA supporters are an exception to this societal trend and will show up en masse at the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the WGA Ministry! (See details elsewhere in newsletter.)

We have a good foundation for this hope, as one of the fundamental tenets of the WGA ministry is its emphasis on the importance of community as a context for healing and growth. WGA alumnae all over the city are in different churches and denominations. They are found in a wide variety of professions, single and married, followers and leaders in their various communities. They are a diverse group of people—but one thing you will find they have in common: they are active participants in building community wherever they find themselves.

The reason for this is because we know that if a person is to be a healthy follower of Christ, the message of the gospel must be lived out within the fellowship of the saints, a community of believers.

On September 17th, let's all be found at the WGA community celebration—let there be no "bowling alone" on that night! We really want to see our team mates face to face!

Mary Heathman



Founding Director



A Measure of Grace

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Boundaries Part 2

by Roger Jones

Last month, I introduced the topic of boundaries by sharing some of the struggles I have been facing over the past few years. Much in my life has changed since becoming the Executive Director of WGA and, more recently, getting married. With transition came the need to revisit some of the boundaries I have in my life: work, friendships, family, etc...

We don't all struggle with boundaries in the same way. Some of us have so many boundaries that it is difficult to be known and loved. Others have so few boundaries that they can't say no and are consequently spread really thin. And sometimes we have boundaries, but they are in the wrong place. In this month's article, I will share the four types of boundary problems identified by Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend in their book titled *Boundaries*.

Compliants: Saying "Yes" to the Bad

Compliant people have fuzzy and indistinct boundaries; they "melt" into the demands and needs of other people.

They can't stand alone, distinct from people who want something from

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them. Compliers, for example, pretend to like the same restaurants and movies their friends do “just to get along.” They minimize their differences with others so as not to rock the boat. Compliers are chameleons. After a while, it’s hard to distinguish them from their environment.¹

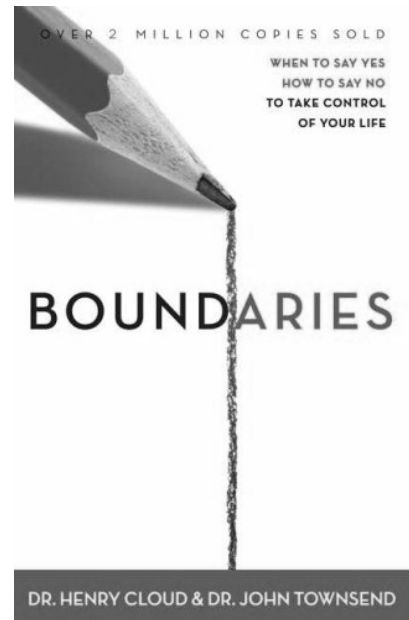
Fear is a big motivator for the *compliant* person. They are afraid that saying no will hurt someone’s feelings or cause them to be angry. They fear shame or some type of punishment. They wonder if they will be seen as selfish. Often, these fears are experienced as guilt. Ultimately, saying yes when they should say no seems better than putting relationships at risk. The cost is the *compliant* person’s sense of self.

Avoidants: Saying “no” to the Good

It’s the inability to ask for help, to recognize one’s own needs, to let others in. Avoidants withdraw when they are in need; they do not ask for the support of others.

Why is avoidance a boundary problem? At the heart of the struggle is a confusion of boundaries as walls. Boundaries are supposed to be able to “breathe,” to be like fences with a gate that can let the good in and the bad out. Individuals with walls for boundaries can let in neither bad nor good. No one touches them.²

The *avoidant* person experiences shame that they have needs or wants. They experience their problems and desires as bad or destructive. It feels too vulnerable to ask for help, so they will get by on their own. Even sharing positive feel-



ings can be problematic for the *avoidant* as being celebrated means that they are known. This feels risky. The cost to the *avoidant* is that they are not known for who they truly are. Combine the *compliant* and the *avoidant* into one person, and things get really difficult. They will give a whole to help a friend move to a new home but feel guilty about asking for a ride to the airport.

Controllers: Not Respecting Others' Boundaries

Controllers can't respect others' limits. They resist taking responsibility for their own lives, so they need to control others.

Controllers believe the old jokes about training top sales people: no means maybe, and maybe means yes. While this may be productive in learning to sell a product, it can wreak havoc in a relationship.

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Controllers are perceived as bullies, manipulative and aggressive.

The primary problem of individuals *who can't hear no*—which is different from *not being able to say no*—is that they tend to project responsibility for their lives onto others. They use various means of control to motivate others to carry the load intended by God to be theirs alone.³

There are two types of *controllers*: aggressive controllers and manipulative controllers. The *aggressive controller* doesn't listen to other people's boundaries. They may be verbally or physically abusive. Most of the time, they aren't even aware that other people have boundaries. The *manipulative controller* is aware of other's boundaries, but tries to talk them out of them somehow. They can be seductive or use guilt to get their way.

Controllers rarely feel loved, because people are with them out of fear, guilt, or dependency. Deep down they know they are pulling the strings, and they feel isolated. Strength has been confused by control; intimacy by power.

Nonresponsives: Not Hearing the Needs of Others

Termed “nonresponsives” because of their lack of attention to the responsibilities of love, these individuals exhibit the opposite of the pattern exhorted in Proverbs 3:27 (NRSV): “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it” (that last phrase, “in your power,” has to do with our resources and availability). Another key Scripture here is “If it is possi-

ble, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom. 12:18 NRSV). Again, note the condition: “so far as it depends on you”: we can't bring peace to someone who doesn't accept it!

Both of the above verses indicate the same idea: we are responsible to care about and help, *within certain limits*, others whom God places in our lives. To refuse to do so when we have the appropriate resources can be a boundary conflict.

Nonresponsives fall into one of two groups:

1. Those with a critical spirit toward others' needs (a projection of our own hatred of our needs onto others, a problem Jesus addressed in Matthew 7:1-5). They hate being incomplete in themselves. As a result, they ignore the needs of others.

2. Those who are so absorbed in their own desires and needs they exclude others (a form of narcissism).⁴

As stated in the quote above, the *nonresponsive* person ignores their responsibility to love. It is sometimes perceived as basic insensitivity, but it is more than just that. Where the *compliant* person takes on too much responsibility, the *nonresponsive* person takes on little or no responsibility. The healthy person does not take responsibility for another person's emotional well being, attitudes, or behaviors. However, they may have responsibilities to another person. The *avoidant* ignores their own personal needs, whereas the *nonresponsive* ignores the needs of others.

You may have read through these differ-

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ent types of boundary problems and said to yourself, "Wait! I have all of these problems!" It is possible to operate differently in different settings. You may be a *controller* at work, because projects have measureable progress and deadlines. At the same time, you may be a *nonresponsive* at home, withholding what is in your power to give to your relationships. Sometimes boundary problems are operating together at the same time.

If the topic of boundaries is something that strikes a chord with you and you would like to learn about how to heal

from these problems, I highly encourage you to read the Cloud and Townsend book *Boundaries* where I have found these quotes. Not only do the authors discuss how to develop healthy boundaries, they also delve into issues specific to boundaries with family and friends, your spouse, your work, children and yourself.

¹ Henry Cloud & John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), pgs. 52-53.

² Cloud & Townsend, 54-55.

³ Cloud & Townsend, 56.

⁴ Cloud & Townsend, 60.

Heartsick... Again

By Mary Heathman, a reprint

In February of 1999, and again in 2008, in a newsletter article called *Heartsick*, I wrote about circumstances that can send me into a spiral of discouragement. As I read the article, looking for something to write about today, I found myself in tears over my own words from almost ten and twelve years ago. It has been a very sad week for people close to me, and I have listened to several WGA group members who have been deeply discouraged lately.

Yet in the rereading, I was encouraged by the process I described about how I deal with myself when brought down by discouragement. It was a good reminder for me, and because it is so relevant for today, I decided to reprint an excerpt to encourage newsletter readers as well.

"As I think of [so many] sad situations, my mind cringes - on your behalf as well as mine. I want to remind us all that God is good and that He works all things together for good . . . I believe and have experienced this truth many times, and I praise God often for His sovereignty.

"But sometimes the counting of many blessings and the remembering of God's promises just isn't what's needed for the moment. In moments like these, I draw strength from the words of Job, when he says, "My good days are in the past. My hopes have disappeared. My heart's desires are broken" Job 17:11 (Living). Job seems to understand what heartsickness feels like, [and in the reading] I no longer feel quite as alone [in my despair].

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“Job goes on to say, “The fact of the matter is that God has overthrown me and caught me in his net. I scream for help and no one hears me. I shriek, but get no justice. God has blocked my path and turned my light to darkness. He has stripped me of my glory and removed the crown from my head. He has broken me down on every side, and I am done for. He has destroyed all hope.” Job 19:6-10 (Living) It appears that Job knows the buck stops with God, and reading his complaint gives me permission to pour out my own frustration. In the doing of this, the darkness seems less thick.

“In the midst of his complaint, Job says something remarkable, “But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And I know that after this body has decayed, this body shall see God! Then he will be on my side! Yes, I shall see him, not as a stranger, but as a friend! What a glorious hope!” Job 19:25-27 (Living) Well, I find myself with a choice here - write Job off as nuts, or follow his example. On my good days, I follow his lead. Job, having lost over a dozen children, his wealth and health all in one day, lifted the eyes of his heart and remembered that in the end God wins and we do too. If Job could do that, then I can shake myself free of my own discouragement, at least for a moment, and strain toward God, naming Him as my Salvation, and looking forward to the day when my faith shall be sight and I will see him as a friend.

“Later, maybe several days, Job says, “[God’s] mind concerning me remains unchanged, and who can turn him from his purposes? Whatever he wants to do,

he does. So he will do to me all he has planned, and there is more ahead. Job 23:13-14 (Living) Here we see acceptance, maybe a bit of resignation, but certainly a submission to God and His purposes, not just for today’s circumstances, but for what is up ahead as well. Whether sooner or later, I want to get to that place too. I’ve been there before and I know it’s the place of peace and hope. I pray for my friends and for our group members that they, too, will persevere and come into that place as well. Will you pray with me?

“A FINAL NOTE: Anybody who sets their course to live a godly life will face diverse troubles. We can count on it. There will be times when we lose our peace, maybe even lose our hope, and our hearts will get sick with the realities of this fallen world, especially our own sin nature. There will also be times when our hearts’ desires, even that which we believe God promised us, are so far out of reach we despair that they will ever be fulfilled. But even so, we can shake off all of that and look up toward Him who is our Salvation and remember that our goal, the real One, the only eternal One is reachable and assured. The feelings come and go, but the truth is the same nonetheless. “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1Peter 1:8

The only thing that matters forever can not be taken from us.”

Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

Shotgun!

In Matthew 20 Jesus tells the parable of the workers hired throughout the day—some early on and some late—who are all paid the same wage at the end of the day. As the all-day laborers watched the one-hour laborers receive the same pay, they complained, “These who were hired last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us.” If anyone has ever had children, listened to children or been a child, the gist of this phrase is hauntingly familiar. Let me put it another way: “She got a bigger piece than I did!!” “I was here first!” As we grow taller we continue to complain about the injustices done to us --“Well I wonder who he slept with to get promoted before me!” or “What’s wrong with this idiot! I was in this lane first!”

I should be first. I should get at least the same if not more. I deserve better.

The master in Jesus’ parable responds to the grumbling workers, “are you envious because I am generous?” Why is it so hard for me to even consider celebrating with

someone else’s success or advancement instead of immediately complaining about my own lesser standing? This parable about the kingdom of heaven works to remind me that God is ultimately in control of justice, not me. Will I trust him with it? Will I enter into the realm where my anxiety to stay ahead and keep things “fair” melts away into genuine joy for other people? Will I join in worshiping God for His generosity to others instead of obsessing over His failure to see things my way?

A few days a week during the summer I have a couple of extra kids that I tote around with mine so that I have an excuse to go to Waterworld, and the zoo, and hold the tarantula at the Butterfly Pavilion without looking like a crazy old woman doing it by myself. For the first few weeks this summer they drove me crazy everytime we went to get in the car. “Shotgun!”* one of them would yell, followed by the riotous protests of the other two, “No Sir!! I called it while you were in the bathroom before we ever left the house!” “Well, I called Shotgun Infinity and that means I always get it.” And on, and on, and

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on. So I told them about this parable. And I said, "So we are going to practice a different way of thinking. No one can claim the front seat for themselves. You can only offer it to someone else. The theory is that generosity spreads and it will come back to you. But even if it doesn't, you have done the right thing." (the negative incentive for this project was that if anyone claimed "shotgun" for themselves, then no one sat in the front seat and they all had to cram into the backseat.) What has amazed me over the weeks since the project went into effect is the calmness and gratitude that have evolved around getting into the car. And justice. If someone gets offered "shotgun" two times in a row, they almost always say, "no, I had it last time, would you like to sit there?" It's a tiny microcosm of the kingdom. Little children are leading me. I find myself letting other cars merge in front of me more often when I'm driving. Does it really hurt me to be

generous with 5 extra seconds? I find myself thinking a little bit more quickly about not feeling sorry for myself when I hear about someone else who has accomplished something I've only dreamed about. What a great accomplishment for them!! They must feel really good about that.

I remember a girl in elementary school that asked me what grades I had gotten on my report card. When she found out my grades were better than hers, she kicked me in the shins and stomped away. I don't want to be that girl. I want to "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn (Rom 12:15). I want to willingly take the backseat and celebrate the one honored with the front seat. This sounds like contented and joyful living to me. Jesus, transform my thoughts to celebrate your generosity at every opportunity.

*Somewhere in the history of automobiles, kids determined that sitting in the front passenger seat was the position of preeminence in the car. Modern tradition dictates that whichever child yells "Shotgun" first before entry into the car for any given trip, can claim the position.



July In Review

July 2nd: Intercessory Prayer

July 9th: Men's Event

July 23rd: Women's Event

Thursday Night Group

July 7th: 24 People

July 14th: 25 people

July 21st: 26 People

July 28th: 31 People

Orientation meeting: 4 new people

August And Beyond

August 7th: Roger will be speaking in the morning and evening services at Scum of the Earth Church

September 3rd: Intercessory Prayer. Join us from 8:00— 9:00 am at the WGA offices

September 17th: WGA 25th Anniversary Celebration.

October 21-23: Leadership Retreat—please pray for our leaders!

WGA 25th Anniversary Celebration!

Included in the evening are light appetizers and desserts, silent auction, inspirational stories and the opportunity to invest in the next 25 years of Where Grace Abounds

**September 17, 2011, 7:30-9:30 PM
Denver Tivoli Center: Turnhalle Room**

Dress Attire: Semi-Formal
\$25.00 a Person
Please RSVP By September 1, 2011

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Where Grace Abounds
exists to guide and support
men and women who seek to
understand sexuality and
relationship, and to inspire
all people to know and
personally appropriate
God's plan for their
sexuality and relationships.

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